RESTORATION REVIEW

THE REFORMER'S FATE

As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, "Come, and hear what comes forth from the Lord." And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with their lips they show much love, but their heart is set on their gain. And lo, you are to them like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. *Ezekiel* 33:30-32

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GOOD WORD FROM ABILENE

Wesley Reagan gave a speech at the Abilene Christian College Lectures this year that deserves the commendation of us all. Even before I had opportunity to read the speech I had heard of its invigorating effect from those who were present when it was delivered. Quite obviously there should be more of this kind of thing at college lectureships, ideas that challenge the thinking and question the *status quo*. The rarity of such may be accounted for on two grounds: first, a man of deep conviction must be on the program; second, he must have sufficient courage to state his case. Within the framework of partyism, whether religious or political, this combination is indeed rare. The speeches at the centers of orthodoxy that cut across party thinking are, therefore, something like angels' visits, few and far between. But we are thankful for what does come, and we commend both the brother and the college that made it possible.

Some of the points in the speech that are especially noteworthy are:

1. We have worked largely with a certain economic class of respectable white people in a narrow strip across a few southern states. Indians, Negroes, and the non-whites generally, along with the poor and the outcasts, we have cared little for. Our Great Commission in the "Revised Modern Practice Version" should therefore read: 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all middle class southern Anglos with good moral reputations."

2. Where our congregations are large we are known by bankers, editors, school boards and civic clubs as people who pay their bills and make good after-dinner speakers, but we are not known by the poor. We are seldom seen in the slums, prisons, and charity wards of hospitals.

3. While a firm doctrinal stand is important, we must also be conscious of the cry of human need. Is Christianity a religion of doctrine only? Or is it a religion of service, giving and doing? Preaching compassion without practicing it is what James spoke of as the corpse of Christianity. We need to get down into the ditch of human need and dirty our hands and empty our pockets helping people.

4. Our urgent age of exploding population, nuclear warheads, and instant communication has made unity a practical necessity as well as a doctrinal truth. Denominations are discussing their differences, and some of them are uniting, and these efforts toward unity often represent a genuine concern for the Biblical doctrine of unity. We too should converse with those involved in ecumenical movements. In our recent past we have had much to say about unity, but our practice has been one of splitting and splintering.

5. While it is true that we cannot sit down at the conference table to negotiate the gospel, why can we not converse with others toward a mutual understanding of the gospel? Why can we not at least present our convictions and seek to understand theirs? How long can we stand in our pulpits and cry, "Unity, unity," while we refuse to discuss with others the basis of unity? Until we try to understand and be understood, we actually contribute to the confusion and division in the religious world. Honest differences can sometimes be resolved by frank conversations. Mistrust, misunderstanding and misrepresentation can be minimized.

6. What are we saying to the public on the most pressing moral and spiritual needs of our time? Where is the John the Baptist among us who will rise up and condemn Herod's adultery? We do little to preach the gospel to a society as a whole. We preach mostly to the Church with a few visitors. Evaluated from the standpoint of an evangelized world, we are an utter failure.

7. One of our desperate needs is to develop more powerful public preachers. We need preaching that will be quoted in the news columns of the papers, not because it is bizarre or sensational, but because it is relevant and incisive.

UNITY MEET IN DALLAS

The Seminar on Fellowship at Wynnewood Christian Chapel in Dallas in June was shared by more than a hundred brethren from at least eight different segments of Churches of Christ-Christian Churches, along with representative people from a few other groups. Interest ran high, the studies were inspiring, and the exchanges were penetrating. A wonderfully fine brotherly spirit prevailed throughout, with absolutely no untoward incident occurring.

These unity meetings have demonstrated, if nothing else, that brethren of widely divergent views, who have previously had no contact with each other because of the tragedy of division, can indeed come together and pray, sing, talk, and study. We have found it to be true virtually without exception that everyone who *attends* these gatherings is convinced that they are good for us all.

The press coverage was excellent if not incredible. Both of our metropolitan dailies gave us writeups, but one of them, the *Dallas Times Herald*, gave us daily coverage, providing five writeups that ran from 12 to 18 inches in two-column spread, one of which

made the front page! The *Herald* also fed the stories to the Religious News Service, which makes its way around the world. I read about ourselves in one widely-circulated denominational journal that resulted from RNS coverage.

The newspapers thought it significant that a congregation within a divided denomination would invite all the divergent groups to sit down together and talk over the differences, and while they are at it to go to the trouble also of listening to what Jews and Roman Catholics have to say about it all. From these writeups came several interesting contacts, one of which was with three study groups in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area that meet from house to house on an ecumenical basis. Some of us have since met with one such group made up of Roman Catholics and Protestants, who visit with each other each month and study together the great writings of both Protestants and Roman Catholics. This is strictly at the grassroots level, and is carried on by laymen whose clergymen are not enthusiastic about it. I might give you a fuller report on this in these columns at another time.

The most unique feature of the seminar was the appearance of The Rev. Raphael Kamel of St. Monica Catholic Church in Dallas, who told us that he would never have shared in such a program five years ago - “and it would have been too bad for me if I had!” He was pointing out how much his church had changed: “The Catholic Church has changed more in the past five years than in the previous 300 years!”

The priest was friendly, humble, yielding, even to the point of being disarming. He was obviously sincere in his plea that all Christians learn to work together in those ways consistent with their convictions. Someone asked him if he had to ask his bishop about appearing on the program, or if he had to give an account of his remarks. He explained that he was perfectly free to do as he wished, that he had said nothing to the bishop, and that the bishop would not expect him to do so. From the experiences that we were having with some of our own brethren the question arose as to whether Church of Christ folk are as free as Roman priests!

The Jewish rabbi was all wound up to tell us how the Christian unity movements looks to a Jew, and how he thinks the Jews are related to it all. But he had an attack of some kind the morning that he was to appear. We felt we were the losers. I had appeared at the rabbi’s congregation in Dallas some months before, and I was sure he would be an interesting experience for our brethren.

The bulk of the seminar was, of course, given over to the family affair of our own divisions. There were many highlights. Prof. DeGroot of Texas Christian University observed that the important thing in the immediate future was communication with each other, something we have sadly lacked, but which has now begun. He pointed to the forty mergers of denominations in recent years as a hopeful sign, but saw the work of unity as extending well into next century.

Prof. Clarence Stanke of Midwest Christian College in Oklahoma City (an Independent Christian Church brother) defined fellowship as a two-way relationship between God and man, one vertical and one horizontal. The vertical is between man and God, the horizontal between man and man. The vertical makes possible the horizontal. It is the vertical that should concern man, for the horizontal will follow in due course. Man does not control the horizontal anyway, for it depends on the vertical for its existence.

Harold Fite of the Castleberry Church of Christ in Ft. Worth, which is labeled these days as "conservative," insisted in a friendly and brotherly manner that substantial doctrinal agreement and uniformity in interpretation of scripture is essential to unity. While Frank Morgan of the Hampton Place Church of Christ, which would be classed as "liberal" by brother Fite's group, did not speak to that particular point, he did emphasize that fellowship is the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is as we become more spiritual that we are drawn closer to each other.

Carl Ketcherside, of non-instrumental Church of Christ background, pointed out that the same thing that makes one a son of God makes him a brother to every other son of God. "Brotherhood is not created by a relationship to each other, but by a mutual relationship to the Father," he said.

Prof. S. Lewis Johnson of Dallas Seminary, a Baptist and a Greek scholar who enriched the seminar by sitting on the panel on *Kerygma and Didache and their Relation to Fellowship*, warned against letting ecumenical concern cause doctrinal indifference. He admitted that doctrinal agreement is not necessary to fellowship, but it does strengthen fellowship.

If we had awarded a prize to the one who made the most timely, provocative, and resourceful presentation, I personally would consider it a draw between that given by Thomas Langford, a new Ph.D. from TCU but of non-class Church of Christ who joins the faculty at Texas Tech this fall, on *Identifying the Heretic;* and A. Dale Crain, minister to a Lincoln, Neb. Christian Church (Independent) who spoke on *The Church and Individual Freedom.*

We will not try even a sentence summary for we hope to present articles by both of these men, based on their presentations, within the near future. But these men, like Obert Henderson and Curtis Lydic who were also on the program, represent a young crop of intelligent minds and dedicated hearts that are going to make a difference in the church of tomorrow. Wise enough to remain within the framework that Providence placed them, they are also spiritual enough to rise above partyism and catch the vision of what the fellowship of the saints can mean to us all.

It is only when men are left free that they can seriously strive toward excellence. A stale orthodoxy breeds mediocrity and superficiality. It can be terribly dull and unedifying. Brethren who complain of such things in the lectureships at the Christian Colleges should

have a unity meeting, inviting first of all those with whom they differ the most, and leave each one free to say what he will. We will be glad to insure it against dullness! And with men on board such as we had in Dallas, you will be thankful for it all and fully confident that all have been blessed, even when your audience is a mixture of Ph.D.'s, preachers, students, laborers and housewives.

One aged brother declared most seriously that it was the greatest experience he ever had, and another brother wrote: "It was probably one of the most significant meetings of its kind in this generation."

As we say in these parts, one day we were in high cotton and the next day in tall corn, and in the evenings we ate high on the hog!

WHO PREACHES THE GOSPEL?

Sometime back the following notice appeared in *Christian Reporter,* a newspaper about Churches of Christ in the Dallas area:

"A picture directory of the preachers of the Gospel of Christ in the Dallas area is being planned for an early issue of the *Christian Reporter.* All the preachers in the area are requested to send a recent glossy print photo."

Surely the editor would be startled if he were deluged with a mailbag full of pictures from hundreds of preachers, including Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and all the rest. Should that happen we presume the editor would be able to go through them and identify "the preachers of the Gospel of Christ in the Dallas area," just as we have brethren who have the unique talent of going through the telephone directory and identifying the Christians, based primarily upon what church they belong to.

Dr. W. A. Criswell, who for almost a generation has ministered to the First Baptist Church in Dallas, the largest of all Baptist churches, will not be included in the preachers' picture gallery. The judgment is that he does not preach the gospel of Christ. It is not that he is wrong in some of his doctrinal views, but that *he does not preach the gospel.* I read articles by Bishop Martin of the Methodist Church in journals published abroad, and he is definitely one of the great churchmen of the nation, let alone of the Dallas area. But we will not find Bishop Martin's picture in the directory, for he does not preach the gospel of Christ.

Even the renowned Billy Graham, who is a member of Criswell's church, cannot get his picture in. He doesn't preach the gospel either.

The *Christian Reporter* is not proposing a picture gallery of those preachers who are right on all doctrinal points (by the way, *whose* picture could possibly be included?) but "the preachers of the Gospel of Christ in the Dallas area." We are persuaded that the editor does not quite mean what he says. He means "the Church of Christ preachers in the Dallas area."

Well, not quite that, for there are a score or more of Church of Christ ministers that he would not include. There are now some six or seven preachers among the premillennial brethren in the Dallas area, all of whom will accept the editor of the *Christian Reporter* into their fellowship, but none of whom he will accept into his picture gallery of preachers of the gospel.

There are others: the "antis" of all descriptions, as they are called. The non-class, non-Herald of Truth, non-cups preachers in the Dallas area would add up to nearly a score. Are these not preachers of the gospel?

So what the editor *really* means is something like this: "the preachers in the Dallas area who belong to our particular party within the Churches of Christ." But that isn't the orthodox way to say it.

Who is a minister of the gospel of Christ? Who qualifies for the Master's picture gallery? Must we conclude that only those ministers who are loyal to the particular tenets of a Church of Christ group are gospel preachers? The condition of both the church and the world is bad enough already without any such conclusion as that.

When a man proclaims victory over sin through the risen Christ he is a gospel preacher. Men like Dr. Criswell, Bishop Martin, and Billy Graham proclaim the glad tidings of heaven. They may err in their instructions as to how men are to *respond* to the gospel, just as we all err in many things, but they are as much preachers of the gospel as any of the rest of us.

"I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures." (I Cor. 15:1-4) It was in proclaiming these facts of heaven that made Paul a gospel preacher. The same proclamation today makes the one who proclaims it a gospel preacher, be he a Methodist bishop, a Baptist evangelist, or a Church of Christ minister from Abilene.

It is risky business for preachers or editors in any area to take it upon themselves to determine who should be included in a list of gospel preachers. By means of their pulpits and editorial columns they bind and loose as they please. A man is *out* when "the gospel preachers of the area" no longer accept him. Despite our claims of congregational autonomy, these conditions prevail. The historians label such maneuvering *ecclesiasticism.* Jesus had other words to describe it.

OPERATION DEEP FREEZE

We may suppose that Robert C. W. Ettinger intends to be taken seriously in his book *The Prospect of Immortality*, in which he suggests that science may find a way to freeze a person who has died, thus preserving him until such time as medical knowhow is able to correct what caused his death, at which time he will be thawed and restored to life. The

book is not intended as science fiction, but is rather a serious proposal as to what the future might hold for man. It just might be, Ettinger supposes, that man may someday conquer death itself, just as he has succeeded in conquering most of the diseases that has for centuries plagued him. Science must yet defeat such things as cancer, heart-diseases, multiple sclerosis, and psychiatric illnesses — and then the greatest of the antagonists, death itself!

Ettinger observes that there are different stages of death: clinical, biological, and cellular. If the death process can be arrested after the first stage, which is only the cessation of heart beat and breathing and is not a degeneration of cells as the later stages are, by instantaneous freezing, then the body can be stored until science knows how to correct the causes of death.

Presumably one could choose the age of the future in which he would like to live again. If he wanted to avoid any such embarrassments as coming back at a time when his widow would be married to another man, or when he would have to face many of his old unpaid debts, then he could decree a new life for himself a thousand years from now or even ten thousand. This way he could satisfy his curiosity as to what the world will then be like. In that case his frozen carcass would be labeled: “To be resuscitated in 11965 A.D.”

Ettinger recognizes some rather formidable problems to his proposal, both practical and scientific. It would be costly, as much as $50,000 per body. There is the medical problem of overcoming the bodily damage caused by present-day freezing methods. Too, one has to be frozen immediately, so he can’t “die” just anywhere. He certainly can’t drop dead on a hunting trip if he expects to live again in 11965 A.D. Then you have the problem of senility. Who wants to be an old man forever? Ettinger’s prospect of immortality offers no hope that one can return *young.* Not the least of the problems is the one that we already have: over-population. Add to this the problem of storing all the bodies and “Operation Deep Freeze” appears unlikely.

But I am realistic enough about human nature to think of still other problems, some of them indeed gruesome. I can envisage an age (The Post-Atomic Era?) in which the nations that are seeking to rebuild civilization will be at war with each other over the great depository of icy cadavers in the North Pole. The wrong side wins and we are all aroused from our winter of contentment only to be made slaves of a tyrant!

Up to this point I have been only half-serious, in case you have to be told, but Ettinger is more than half-serious. His new book is a reflection of an age that is becoming increasingly ignorant of the will of God. Ours is a nation that is behaving more and more as if there were no God. Unlike Hagar who was so conscious of the presence of God in her life that she could say, ‘Thou, God, seest me,” we are a people who, more like Nietzsche, behave as if God were dead.

We are allowing science to become a sacred cow. Science certainly has the holy calling of taking what God has given and actualizing its potential, but science is not God. Science can explore what God has opened, but it cannot open what God has shut.

The Bible makes it clear that "It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27) Our point is not that man is to die only *once* and not twice, as Ettinger would allow; but that man does indeed have an irreversible date with death, science not withstanding. Death is according to God's will. The Stoics, as humanistic as they were, were better philosophers about death than many in our secularistic age. Marcus Aurelius said, "Do not *despise* death, but be well content with it, since this too is one of those things which nature wills." Epictetus wrote: "If you seek to avoid death you will be unhappy."

The Christian hope of immortality is a glorious contrast to that of Ettinger and it has much more meaning than that of the Stoics. Paul could speak of his desire to depart and be with Christ (Philip. 1:23), and he mentions that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). He also speaks of "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).

To the Christian death does not mean cessation of life, but a transition to a fuller expression of life. It is thus the gateway to the most abundant life.

He who has the keys to death and hades said: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26)

THE GREATEST MISSION FIELD

Elton Trueblood's book *The Yoke of Christ* is one that we would almost make a man read. His chapter on "Conversion within the Church" is especially provocative. It is here that he speaks of the church as one of the great mission fields: "Our main mission field today, so far as America is concerned, is within the church membership itself."

He points to the fact that only 4 % of all Americans claim no church affiliation. The world has thus overflowed the church, filling it with unconverted souls. Many who claim membership rarely attend, and many others who do are by no means dedicated to the Cause of Christ. Membership in a church is therefore almost meaningless, for it is fashionable to belong to some church. It is mildly anti-American not to belong. Trueblood calls for conversions *within* the church rather than *to* the church. Our task is to reach the present membership of churches with a message of such vitality that they experience a real conversion to Christ. Even though membership is virtually meaningless, it has one enormous advantage: it renders one vulnerable to a deeper appeal. They are there to be reached, many of them are.

He observes that most American churches do very little growing from without, that most conversions are either the children that grow up in the church or people who come from other churches. Adult conversions from the world without are few. The main reason for this is that the church itself is so much like the world that conversion *from* the world no longer makes sense. The church itself must experience conversion.

Trueblood illustrates this point by a reference to a downtown church in Glasgow, Scotland that thought its days of vitality were over. But then it caught fire; the people, not the building. It now not only has a full house for worship, but the members themselves are ministering to the downtown community. They team up and visit coffee bars, conduct street meetings, and draw derelicts back to the houses of worship. They have ex-convicts singing in the choir. Friday nights are given over to those whose lives are broken.

He observes that the Billy Graham Crusades have been criticized for getting too many "decisions" from those already in the church. In New York they poured out of the large choir in order to make their commitment, which drew criticism from the press. Trueblood says this is a misunderstanding of conversion. One may be singing in a choir and yet be in need of rebirth. Those that Jesus reached by his ministry were not "Skid Row" characters, but people who were already religious. 'You must be born again" was uttered by Jesus to one who already had church affiliation. The apostles went forth preaching the message of repentance, their labors centering in the synagogues of the Jews.

Are our own churches indeed a mission field? Is not the world too much with us also? We need not wait for outsiders to come into the assembly before we plead for reform. Among our own people we can see the difference between mild religion and a vital Christianity. Surely Christian faith has little meaning until it can say, as did Jesus, 'I am come, not to be ministered to, but to minister." So few of our people are concerned for the woes of others. We are deceived in supposing that success is measured by brick and mortar, budgets and programs, meetings and committees. In our day of affluence it is much easier to erect lavish buildings than it is to cultivate dedicated hearts.

We do well to remember that among the strongest words in the Bible on repentance were spoken to a congregation of Christians, and it was at the door of that church that Jesus stood, requesting entrance.

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the

door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:15-20)

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND CIVIL RIGHTS DEMONSTRATIONS

Norman L. Parks

The Church of Christ is a lower middle class denomination. This identification implies not only a group centered in a clearly defined social stratum, but also a group inclined to read into its religion as binding rules the mores practiced by its members. An example of this is a manuscript by the president of Alabama Christian College entitled "The Attitude of a Christian in the Midst of a Race Crisis."

Though I do not know personally President Rex Turner and have never visited his college (though I once made a modest contribution to its support), I would assume that he is both a very sincere and a humble man. Sincerity and humility, however, are not sufficient to dress in Christian robes the essential authoritarian and reactionary themes of his essay.

In keeping with the legalism of his religious group, President Turner reveals a full acceptance of the dichotomy of superordination-subordination. He identifies three classes of social "sub-ordinates" in wives, children, and " servants" (i.e. negroes). "True enough," he observes, "slavery is unlawful in the United States. The fine principle involved in the master-slave relationship, however, obtains today in both social and civic relationships of a like nature as it did in Paul's day."

During the current race crisis, he believes, the Christian must do nothing to alter the status quo, but must pursue a neutral course. "The present trend on the part of a segment of gospel preachers and leaders to crusade for the cause of desegregation," he writes, "is contrary to the true spirit of Christianity." Those who do so identify with the wrong crowd ("rank modernists") — the familiar guilt-by-association stereotype. Even worse, they become committed to "an effort to displace the gospel of Christ with a social gospel." Christians who oppose racial ghettos and insist that negroes be granted the right to rent or own homes in any residential area, leading to desegregated churches, "are being ridiculous."

Those who approve of peaceful marches, mass petitions, and assemblies to protest second class citizenship, disfranchisement, racial discrimination, or Bull Connor's police dogs may have the constitution and laws on their side, but not the Montgomery educator.

No, indeed! They are “under spiritual obligation” to refrain from such! Martin Luther King and the NAACP by his standards clearly belong to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

No doubt such a stance will win the approval of the Montgomery power bloc It may help in local money-raising and attracting white students. However, it is a reasonable presumption that, in spite of his article, President Turner will sign on the dotted line to obtain federal grants and loans. At least most of the other Church of Christ colleges, trailing far to the rear of the secular institutions, have accepted nominal desegregation and hit the federal money trail. How quick can action come when it becomes possible to serve both God and mammon!

It is a curious mentality which insists that a Christian may not support the negro’s cause, leaving him in his present state of enforced inferiority, but which goes all out for dry laws, movie and book censorship, and Sunday closing laws. Not too long ago the administrators of the largest Church of Christ college appeared in a nation-wide TV documentary clamoring for a movie censorship board in their city.

Does the religion of Christ embrace the dichotomy of superordination-subordination? We think not. As brothers and equals, we are “all one” in Christ Jesus. The injury of one is the injury of all and “any man’s death diminishes me.” A religion which rides by on the other side and fails to express itself in action against the deprivation and the economic, social, and spiritual starvation of one’s fellowman is not the religion described in the New Testament. The meaning of the Nazareth Charter is as broad as the words which Jesus invoked to describe his mission:

> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,
> to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
> to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

This magnificent charter makes no distinction between the gospel of Christ and all-out effort on behalf of the oppressed, the imprisoned, the poverty-stricken, and the disinherited. What kind of religion is it that says to society’s victims, “We will minister to your souls, but we will not march with you or lift our voices to protest any of the burdens which drag you down into the darkness of poverty, ignorance, and vice, sin against your manhood, or rob you of spiritual light?” The man who sees no ray of hope for a better life here is not likely to catch a moving vision of a celestial city hereafter. Homilies and sermons on the racial crisis will be vain unless addressed to the profound reasons for the moral disarray of the American negro.

President Turner is afraid of “excitement,” “social and political unrest,” “demonstrations,” and “agitators.” So is the supporter of every *status quo* order from the Sanhedrin to the Kremlin. Perhaps it has not occurred to him that it is not so much the negro being the agitator as being agitated in his efforts “to reply to God after the silence of the centuries.” Perhaps he doesn’t remember that a group of Christian “agitators” were involved in a riot at Ephesus. And has he forgotten that Paul and his associates were described as “those who have turned the world upside down”? They did, too, because they hit the silversmith business at Ephesus, the soothsaying business in Macedonia, racialism in Athens and class distinction everywhere.

Christianity is not a *status quo* religion, as the scathing social messages of John the Baptist foretold. And they got him into trouble. Truly, as the Good Book reminds us, “We get into the kingdom through many a trouble.”

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AN OVERTURE FOR HARMONY

Claude Stults

Allow me to preface this overture with an emphatic disclaimer of any intention of inveigling Churches of Christ into becoming Christian Churches, and even less of enticing members of Churches of Christ into deserting their present affiliation to “join” a Christian Church. My sole ambition is to persuade the members (all who will listen) of both the Churches of Christ, and the Christian Churches, that they are brethren in Christ, children of God, begotten and inspired of the same Holy Spirit. As such, it is my hope that they will act like brethren — one great brotherhood in Christ, and under God, for the glory of God.

Allow me to say also that I have no argument to offer in regard to either name (Church of Christ, or Christian Church), since, according to my Bible (King James, American Revised, American Standard and several others) , God never gave a name to the church; and in those books I find the church called: “Church of Christ,” “Church of God,” “Church of the Lord,” “Church of the First Born,” “Church of the saints,” and “Christians,” evidently the “New name,” foretold by Isaiah.

However, "There's one high hurdle to jump," in order to Christian unity, or harmony in the Restoration Movement. After more than forty years' survey of the ground, and the continuous running of obstacle courses, I am convinced that that high hurdle is the problem of music in worship. Christian Churches and so-called "Disciple Churches" both use a piano or an organ, or both, in their public worship. There are some twenty-five or thirty factions, or sects, within the Churches of Christ, all of whom sing only, without instrumental accompaniment of any kind. The problem really consists in the fact that all parties to the division are fully convinced that their positions are fully authorized by the scriptures. It is to this problem that I address this overture; not in the hope of converting any group to the other side, but of persuading all groups to recognize each other as Christian and brethren, so that the Restoration Movement can once again become one brotherhood.

It has long been the position of the Christian Churches, and the Disciples, that there is neither commandment, apostolic precedent, nor necessary inference, that precludes, or invalidates the use of a musical instrument. That position needs some critical examination. On the other hand, it is the position of the Churches of Christ that there is an apostolic commandment telling what kind of music to use in worship, and since playing an instrument is not particularly specified, it is forbidden. That position, too, needs some critical examination. Perhaps, it would be better to begin with this latter examination; and since it all hinges largely upon the meaning of a Greek participle, "Psallontes," I propose that we start with an examination of the Greek verb, "psallo." It occurs five times in the New Testament: Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15, twice; Ephesians 5:19; and James 5:13. It occurs many times in the Old Testament LXX, or Septuagint.

The first reference in the New Testament, Romans 15:9 says, "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and *psallo* unto thy name." Paul says, "It is written." It is proper to inquire where it is written, and what Paul means by the citation. We find it to be a quotation of four Old Testament scriptures: 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalms 18:49, Psalms 57:9, and Psalms 108:3. What Paul is saying is that David prophesied that the time would come when the Gentiles would "glorify" God by *"psalloing"* unto His name. Furthermore, Paul cites that prophecy as justification of his evangelism among the Gentiles, and their conversion to Christianity. He cites the fact that God had foretold, through David, approximately a thousand years before-hand, that the Gentiles would do exactly what they were doing, as proof that it was God's will and foreknowledge that they should do so. But what were they doing in Paul's day, that had been prophesied, a thousand years before, in David's day, that they would do? They were *psalloing* to God's name, glorifying Him. And what was that? What was *"psalloing"?*

Most, or all, preachers of the Church of Christ say that it was “singing”; and cite the English translations, as evidence of their contention. But I respectfully submit to you that Paul had to mean exactly what David meant, by “psallo”, or he would be misquoting David. If David prophesied by the Holy Spirit that the Gentiles would glorify God by playing (a musical instrument) to His name, and Paul said that David prophesied that they would glorify God by singing to his name, he would certainly be misquoting David, and telling a lie besides. But, it is argued, he used exactly the same word that David had used a thousand years before. . . only “psallo” had alienated, or changed its meaning in the meantime. Brother Kurfees wrote that it changed meaning, from “play” to “sing” in the year 146 B.C. Before that date, it meant “play” (a musical instrument); after 146 B.C. it always meant “sing”; so David prophesied that the Gentiles would worship God by “psalloing” — playing a musical instrument; but Paul wrote that they were worshiping God by “singing”, although he used the same word that David had used. However, it cannot be denied that if Paul used any word that did not mean what David meant he misquoted David, and told a lie besides, saying that David said something that he did not say. I am sure that every Christian will agree with me, that the apostle Paul would not, and did not, tell a lie; that the apostle Paul would not, and did not, misquote and misrepresent the prophet David; that the apostle Paul did mean, in Romans 15:9, exactly what David meant and said, in 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalms 18:49; Psalms 57:9 and Psalms 108:3. A thousand years before Paul’s day, David prophesied that the Gentiles would glorify, or worship, God, by playing to His name; and a thousand years later, the apostle Paul declared that they were doing just what David prophesied that they would do.

Brethren, I submit to you, that, regardless of what “psallo” might mean, in the rest of the New Testament, in Romans 15:9, it has to mean “play” (a musical instrument), for that is what it meant in the prophecies that Paul quoted, and Paul had to mean what they meant, or else he was misquoting the Holy Spirit. If they meant one thing, and he meant another, he was misquoting them. Furthermore, I submit to you, that it is not enough to reply, “The translators said that it means ‘sing,’ in both places.” It would be excusable if this were the only wrong translation that our English translators made; but some of the world’s foremost Greek scholars declare that there are at least three hundred thousand errors in the King James Version.

For the sake of brevity, we shall quickly pass over the next reference (I Corinthians 14:15, where “psallo” occurs twice) with only a question or two. If “psallo” means “play” in Rom. 15:9, which it has to do, unless Paul was a liar and corrupter of scripture, why could not the same apostle give it that same meaning the next time that he used it? If “psallo” has to mean “play” in one instance of the apostle’s writings, what law of linguistics precludes its ever again having the same meaning, in the same apostle’s writings?

With this brief, passing notice of I Corinthians 14:15, we shall direct our attention to the next occurrence of "psallo" in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:19. All, or most, of the debaters in the Churches of Christ hold that this is a commandment that tells Christians exactly what kind of music to use in worship, and since it does not specifically command playing an instrument, it forbids it, making the use of a musical instrument in worship a violation of a commandment of God, and a presumptuous sin. However, that argument bogs down in the translation, "making melody." "Melody" is a generic (or general) term, inclusive of any and every kind of melody in the whole world; and the selection is not, and cannot be, limited by the expression, "in, or with, the heart." If a man can make one kind of melody "in, or with, the heart," he, or other men, can make another, or any, kind of melody in, or with the heart. So, if this is indeed a command to Christians, telling them what kind of music to use in worship, it throws the door wide open, not only to playing an instrument, but to playing any kind of instrument.

Only last week, the minister of the Gloster Street Church of Christ, in Tupelo, Mississippi, tried to expound this scripture. His argument seemed to be that "psallo" is a specific, not a generic, word (but we have seen that "melody" is a generic noun, therefore the phrase "making melody" has to be generic also) . I am not much impressed with his argument; it succeeds in proving, mostly, that the translators made a mistake, translating a specific term with a generic phrase. However, I question his scholarship in saying that "psallo" is a specific, not a general term. As the Greeks used the word, one could psallo the beard, a bow-string, a chalk-line, a musical instrument, and, according to the debaters, the vocal cords. An Englishman can play a musical instrument, play games of all kinds, play jokes of every nature, and play a snared fish or animal, to say nothing of playing a part in a drama or farce, or in real life.

As for the rest of the argument, that since playing an instrument is not specifically commanded it is a presumptuous sin, because anything that is not commanded is sin, I want to point out that Paul puts a hydrogen bomb under that logic, in at least three places: Romans 4:15, Romans 5:13 and Romans 7:6, "Where there is no law, neither is there transgression." (John says, "Sin is the transgression of the law.") "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" and "Apart from the law sin is dead." There is no more evident contradiction in any, and all, literature than the dictum of the debaters, "If it is not commanded, it is sin," and the three statements of Paul: "Where there is no law, neither is there transgression"; "Sin is not imputed when there is no law"; and "Apart from the law sin is dead."

Many of the most eminent Greek scholars object to the translation, "making melody," in Ephesians 5:19, on other grounds, also, than those noted, above. They point out that nowhere else, in the other four occurrences of "psallo" in the New Testament, and several scores of occurrences in the Old Testament, have the translators ever found it possible, or

honest, from the viewpoint of scholarship, to translate “psallo”, “make a melody.” In the New Testament, they have translated it “sing”, and “sing a psalm”; and in the Old Testament, “play”, and “sing praises”; but never, never “make melody.” Also, I have read that in no Greek literature translated into English, has “psallo” ever been translated, “make melody.” Not being a student of Greek literature, and not an extensive student of English translations of it, it is impossible for me to say whether this is true or false; but I accept it as true, on the basis of integrity of great scholars and scholarship.

It seems to one Bible student that both the whole fight against the use of a musical instrument in worship and the whole fight for the use of the instrument, are built upon speculation, interpretation, and fallacious translation; this being true, any conclusion would be an opinion. As such, it is not ‘THE FAITH”, and is neither essential to pardon and salvation, a criterion of Christian fellowship and brotherhood, nor the basis of Christian unity . . . or division. If God had only said, “Thou shalt not use a musical instrument in worship,” or “Thou shalt use a musical instrument in worship,” He would have settled the whole matter, once and for all, right then and there. That would have been “The FAITH.” But, since God has not said either, all that man can do is speculate, and form an opinion. However, his opinion will be, and must be, a personal opinion, which he has no right under God to force upon another with different, or with no, opinion, or make a test of brotherhood — either for, or against, the instrument.

It also seems to this Bible student, that the churches that have insisted upon using the instrument are as guilty of speculation, and making their opinion a test of fellowship, as are the churches who reject the instrument. Perhaps they are guiltier, and more responsible for the division in the Restoration Movement, over the question of instrumental music. Arguing, as they do, that the use, or non-use, of an instrument is a matter of opinion, they have made it, nevertheless, a test of fellowship and brotherhood, and perpetuated a most unchristian division of Christians and brethren over a mere opinion, to which they have made themselves slaves.

In order to notice a somewhat different argument, it is proposed that we skip the last occurrence of “psallo” in the New Testament, especially, since it can add little to the observation already made concerning that word: except to point out that it was an apostolic injunction, “Is any merry? Let him *psallo,*” whatever that means; and to point out that this probably does not refer to public, but to private, worship.

In Romans 14:23 it is written, “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” This passage of scripture has often been made to serve as proof that the use of a musical instrument in worship is sin, or sinful, “Because faith cometh by hearing the word of God; and God has not commanded the use of an instrument.” However, that argument works the other way, too. It is a law of logic, truth, and reason, that if a proposition is true, its converse has to be equally true. The converse of this proposition can be stated by transposition of terms; and

we have, “Whatsoever is not sin is of faith.” It is easy to demonstrate that this converse is true; for if it is false, we have the proposition “whatsoever is not sin is not of faith.” But the scripture, and the original proposition, says that whatsoever is not of faith is sin; so we wind up with the absurdity, “whatsoever is not sin is sin.” Q.E.D. the converse, “Whatsoever is not sin is of faith.” The only significance of this fact is that instead of proving that instrumental music is sin, or sinful, because it is not of faith; it is necessary to first prove that it is sinful, before it is possible to prove that it is “not of faith.” That done, then *ipso facto,* it is not of faith, and, of course, sin. But on what other grounds will it be proved sinful?

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate, that I h a v e no desire to convert Churches of C h r i s t to Christian Churches, either “Independent,” or “Disciple”; and I have no desire to “steal sheep” from the Churches of Christ, to become members of Christian Churches. Even less do I have a desire to accomplish a merger or coalition between all of the Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches. The one supreme desire of my heart is that leaders and members of both groups will realize, that this debacle of division is entirely caused by speculation, where God has not spoken definitely and specifically; and that their conclusions are not “THE FAITH”, but a matter of human opinion. It is my heart-felt desire and ambition that both parties will be big enough to realize and acknowledge that since God has not commanded either the use or the non-use of an instrument, it cannot be “THE FAITH”, and cannot be sinful either to use or not to use. It is the ardent desire of my heart that each party will recognize and acknowledge the right of the other party to its opinion, since it can only be an opinion, in the absence of divine commandment, plain statement of truth, approval by an apostle, or necessary inference, so long as they do not try to force that opinion upon others of different opinion. It is my hope that they all will be big enough to realize that we are united in “THE FAITH” however much we may be divided in our human speculation and opinion; that all of every group are children of God, brethren in Christ: one brotherhood united in the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I have no desire, or hope, that Churches of Christ will install pianos or organs in their houses of worship; or that Christian Churches will expurgate them from theirs. Members of Churches of Christ believe that it is scriptural and better to worship God without a musical instrument; for the sake of their conscience, and their love of their Lord, allow and encourage them to do so. Members of the Christian Churches believe that it is scriptural to use the instrument, and that they can worship more spiritually that way; allow them to do so. Neither party can really prove that the other is wrong; or that they themselves are right; why keep trying?

But such a policy, such procedure, might be only the recognition of an impasse. It might be only a gentlemen’s agreement to compromise, or to enter into an armistice, a cessation of hostilities. Even that would be better than the debates, acrimonious

accusations and distrust, the shame among ourselves, and the scorn among "outsiders", to which we have been treated for several generations; but it is not enough to satisfy God. His Son commanded that we love one another as He loved us. All of us, like prodigals, must return home to our Father; and let there be no elder brother among us. During the campaign for "Unification" between the northern and southern branches of the Methodist Church, I asked a southern Presiding Elder what he thought about "Unification." His reply was: "The Northern Methodists are just a little bit north of God, and the Southern Methodists are just a little bit south of God. When they all come back to God, and get into Christ, we'll all be united." That was a good sermon for a Christian preacher, and all the congregations of Churches of Christ, and Christian churches, to hear . . . and heed. — 303 N. Third St., Baldwyn, Mississippi.

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Claude Stults (M.A.. Butler U.) has for many years ministered to Christian Churches in Mississippi. He is now in semi-retirement.

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BOOK NOTES

CREDIT PLAN FOR BOOKS

Restoration Review is now offering a credit plan for its readers. It is so simple that there are not even any carrying charges! You simply order what books you want, and you don't have to pay anything down, and then pay for them, beginning the following month, at the rate of 10% of balance each month, with a minimum payment of $5.00 each month. For example, if you wish to order $60 worth of books *now*, you can do so without any down payment. The first of next month we will send you a bill, indicating that $6.00 is due. When your balance falls below $50, you will be billed for the $5.00 minimum until the account is cleared. But you can keep ordering as you see books advertised that you would like to have, without clearing the balance of previous order. All we ask is that you pay 10% of the balance each month, and that you keep your account within a $100.00 limit.

In view of this emphasis on books we will be calling your attention to many more each month than we have been recently. In order to keep you informed we survey some 15 journals each month, both foreign and domestic, and pass along to you the information that seems most appropriate. We would appreciate your reaction to this plan. Do not hesitate to use it. We plan to continue it indefinitely, so this will be a good way to take care of all your library needs as well as gift items. We would likewise hope to get for you most any book you might want, whether we advertise it or not, and of course you can use your credit plan.

The special issue of *Alexander Campbell: the Man and His Mission* by Louis Cochran and Leroy Garrett is now available in booklet form, with a separate cover that has a picture of the Campbell Home, and an introduction by Perry Gresham. The price is $1.00, including postage. A companion booklet is also still available: *Alexander Campbell and Thomas Jefferson: A Comparative Study of Two Old Virginians,* also at $1.00.

Back issues are available of all the monthly issues of *Restoration Review,* which now number 17, at ten cents each. The quarterly issues, which preceded the monthly numbers, are available at 3 for $1.00. These are rapidly diminishing, but we still have 10 issues of the 20 that were published.

This fall and winter we plan to inform our readers a little more about books that we like and to make them available through our office. One that especially impresses us is by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, preacher to Westminister Chapel in London who left the practice of medicine to be a minister. His book *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* is a reminder that a sad, depressed Christian is a poor recommendation for a faith that is inspired by the resurrection of Christ. The doctor identifies the causes of depression, gathered from his experience in psychiatry, and charts the way for the exuberant joy that characterized the early Christians, a joy that must be recovered by the modern church in this age of anxiety if the battle is to be won. It is easily worth the $3.95 it costs.

We also highly recommend the writings of William Barclay, most of which books are not only sound and scholarly (though non-technical), but also of moderate cost. In his *Many Witnesses, One Lord* he shows how diverse the books of the New Testament are, and yet how they form a unit. More than this he gives many keen insights into the understanding of the New Testament scriptures. Only $2.50.

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You will enjoy seeing *His Life and Our Life,* a little book of devotionals on "The Life of Christ and the Life in Christ," by John A. Mackay. It will encourage you to read the author's conviction that no situation in life becomes impossible if God is taken into account. You will enjoy his devotional on "The Walking Pace" where he points out that the greatest figures of the Bible were great walkers, and how one can benefit spiritually as well as physically by walking. $1.50.

If you are interested in some serious reading in church history, let us suggest you begin with Owen Chadwick's *Reformation,* which at only $5.95 gives you an extended treatment. He has a lucid style and his points are crisp and poignant. You will like his chapter on "The Cry for Reformation" and his treatment of Luther will inspire you. You will find some parallels to our own struggles. History was bunk to Henry Ford, but Ford built cars. Anyone interested in soul-growth should read history.

In the same series *is A History of Christian Missions* by Stephen Neill, which is the story of the spread of Christianity from the beginning until now. More than that it is an interpretation of what has happened in Christian missions, such as the conclusion that the one thing that is uniquely *new* in the twentieth century is that we have a universal religion, and that is Christianity. He gives revealing insights into the struggling Christian missions of Africa and Asia and of the future they may have. This is solid, significant reading, and it goes for over 600 pages. Consequently we have to charge you $7.50 for it. These two volumes, along with four more to come, will comprise The Pelican History of the Church, all prepared by top scholars of Europe and America. You would do well to have the entire set, and we'll be glad to arrange monthly payments for you.

Making Ethical Decisions is a good-looking little paperback that we are going to use in a course in philosophy. You can have one for only $1.00. It is a Christian examination of such everyday moral issues as: *Who wants to be Good?, Everybody does it, why shouldn't I?, Will Christianity work at home? How to get around the Law!* The chapter on marriage and divorce will, we predict, provoke a lot of thought.

The two books which we want to *make* our friends read are the novels by Louis Cochran, which are available in paperback at $2.00 each. *The Fool of God* is the thrilling story of Alexander Campbell, while *Raccoon John Smith* is the fabulous account of the lovable farmer-preacher of Kentucky who was responsible for the first merger of American churches. Both books are as rich in Americana as they are resourceful in the history of Christian unity.

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